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## THE ESCHATOLOGY OF THE KURAN.

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Among the teachings of Mahomet, none has called forth more opposition than his representations of the future state. No small part of this opposition, however, has concerned itself with what are merely the traditions that have gathered around his teachings. It is that which is said in the Kuran about this subject, which should form the standard of judgment and it is a subject that must ever engage the attention of thoughtful men.

1. As to the Judgment Day, it may be said that belief in it is one of the articles of faith in Islam. It is called also the Day of Awakening, the Day of Decision, the Day of Reckoning and similar titles. The time of this day is said to be unknown. "They will ask you about the hour, for what time it is fixed?—say, The knowledge thereof is only with my Lord; none shall manifest it at its time but He; it is heavy in the heavens and in the earth, it will not come to you save on a sudden."\* (Sura 7: 186 seq.) However, many signs preceding it are mentioned. These are, the folding up of the sun, obscuring of the moon, falling of the stars, removal of the mountains, and flowing together of seas, and such like portents.

The prophet attempts in many places to show the probability of the Resurrection from the manifestations of God's power in creation. "O ye folk! if ye are in doubt about the raising (of the dead), verily we created you from earth, then from a clot, then from congealed blood, then from a morsel shaped or shapeless, that we may explain to you."

It is said that the angels will not intercede for any on that day save for those whom God pleases, but each will bear his

\*Citations from the Kuran are taken from Palmer's translation.

own burden, according as the book that will be presented at the blowing of the trumpet will show. "And the Book shall be set forth, and thou shalt see the sinners in fear of what is in it; and they will say, 'Alas, for us! what ails this Book, it leaves neither small nor great things alone, without numbering them?' and they shall find present what they have done; and thy Lord will not wrong anyone." (18:47.)

The teaching is that the day will seem very short, but it is spoken of once as "a day, the measure of which is as a thousand years of what ye number" (32:4); in another place as "a day whose length is fifty thousand years," (70:4). When the affairs of this day are accomplished, angels will guide the just into Paradise but will drive the wicked into hell, where they will be received by nineteen tormenting angels.

2. For this place of torment there are several names which the commentators assign to particular divisions. They hold that there are seven stages in hell citing the following; "It has seven doors; at every door is there a separate party of them." From the last clause it is concluded that different sects will be in each division.

The following are the names of the divisions with the particular sect assigned to each: "Jahannam," the Purgatorial Hell for all Muslims; "The Flaming Fire," for Christians; "The Raging Fire," for Jews; "The Blaze," for the Sabians; "The Scorching Fire," for the Magians; "The Fierce Fire," huge hot fire for idolaters; "The Abyss," bottomless pit for hypocrites. These words, however, in the Kuran are used to denote hell without reference to such divisions.

The following short selections set forth the tortures of hell. It is said that the wicked "shall broil upon a burning fire; shall be given to drink from a boiling spring! no food shall they have save the foul thorn, which shall not fatten nor avail against hunger." "Verily, the zakkum tree (shall be) the food of the sinful; as it were melting, shall it boil in their bellies like the boiling of hot water." "When they shall be cast therein they shall hear its braying as it boils—it will well nigh burst for rage!" "Verily, those who disbelieve in our signs, we will broil them with fire; whenever their skins are well done, then we will change them for other skins, that

they may taste the torment, verily, God is glorious and wise."

Whatever may be said of such representations it is certain that those in the later suras are briefer and *less materialistic*. They are not directed against sin so much as against those who did not believe in the mission of the Prophet, as is shown in the following, "God has promised unto the hypocrites, men and women, and unto the misbelievers, hell fire, to dwell therein for aye; It is enough for them! God shall curse them and theirs shall be enduring woe." The unbelievers will then acknowledge that they were warned, will confess their sins and proclaim God to be just. Mahometan divines claim that all Muslims will go to Jahannam (Gehenna; not Hades the purgatory of the Greeks), where they will remain only to be sufficiently cleansed from their sins that they may enter heaven. But there seems to be little basis for this in the Kuran.

3. In heaven, the Kuran declares, there are seven divisions as in hell, but it is with as little reason. The terms, Abode of Peace, Garden of the Most High, Garden of Eden, Garden of Paradise, etc., applied to the supposed divisions are used interchangeably to designate Paradise.

According to the early suras Paradise is represented as in the following selection: "The similitude of Paradise which is promised to the pious,—in it are rivers of water without corruption, and rivers of milk, the taste whereof changes not, and rivers of wine delicious to those who drink; and rivers of honey clarified; and there shall they have all kinds of fruit and forgiveness from their Lord! (Is that) like him who dwells in the fire for aye? and who are given to drink boiling water that shall rend their bowels asunder?" "Verily, the pious are amid shades and springs and fruit such as they love. Eat and drink with good digestion for that which ye have done."

Thus the early representations of heaven and hell in Islam, though one-sixth of the Kuran is taken up with the details of these, seem to be little else than the projection into the future of what is deemed pleasant or painful here. Paradise then is an intense realization of those things which an Arab of the parched desert would naturally desire; such as, shade,

water, fruit, rest, etc., while hell is just the opposite. In that dry and thirsty land no doubt the most effective representation of future bliss is that of bubbling fountains and shady gardens through which rivers flow, in contrast with surrounding conditions and placed in juxtaposition with the representations of future punishment.

But this is not the whole of the Islamic Paradise; the most objectionable element from a Christian standpoint is the encouragement given to sensuality. About five years after the beginning of the Prophet's mission such representations as the following occur. "Verily for the pious is a blissful place,—gardens and vineyards, and girls of the same age as themselves, and a brimming cup." "Therein are maids of modest glances whom no man nor ginn has ever dishonored." Muir observes that the notices of this voluptuous Paradise belong to a period when Mahomet was living, with a single wife, a chaste and temperate life.

In the ten years following the Hegira, women are referred to only three times. Once it is said, "They shall dwell therein for aye, with pure wives and grace from God," and twice the phrase, "and pure wives for them therein," occurs. Concerning this Muir asks, "was it that the soul of Mahomet had at that period no longings after what he had then even to satiety the enjoyment of? Or that a closer contact with Jewish principles and morality repressed the budding pruriency of the revelation and covered with merited confusion the pictures of the sensual Paradise which had been drawn at Mecca." It is to be noted that the male companions of the female elect are not specified. Will faithful women not renew their youth in heaven as well as faithful men? Concerning this Gibbon observes that, "Mahomet has not specified the male companions of the female elect lest he should either alarm the jealousy of their husbands or disturb their felicity by the suspicion of an everlasting marriage."

It is a question whether such material descriptions of heaven and hell are to be taken literally or figuratively. Without the use of metaphysics one can only speak of the future state in the form of poetic description. So the circumstances of this life must to some extent be used to give both form and

color to the views of the life to come. It is very natural then to picture the future abode as a restored Eden, the abode of man before the fall. Is this then only "Oriental imagery?" If so, what language, one is inclined to ask, would have been used to set forth ideas of a material existence? What joys do the sensual delights, as set forth in the Kuran, represent? Or what can the following mean? "He shall broil in a fire that flames and his wife carrying faggots" (for fuel).

As a student of Islam has observed, is there not too much individualizing in such representations? Perhaps, however, the imagery is not to be pressed too closely, as is often the case with the Hebrew prophets. Whether the representations are to be taken figuratively or not, it is to be remembered as Carlyle says that, "the indulgences, criminal to us, which he permitted, were not of his appointment; he found them practised, unquestioned from immemorial time in Arabia; what he did was to curtail them."

While the Prophet may thus be vindicated, one can scarcely go as far as Carlyle when he says that "such representations teach the Infinite Nature of Duty; that man's actions here are of *infinite* moment to him, and never die or end at all." It is true, perhaps, that heaven and hell are realities to the Mahometan in a sense in which they are not to others, but is not the radical fault of Islam that constant and urgent appeal to a desire for reward? Everything is thrown into the future. A mode of existence is set forth rather than the ideas which have influence in the development of character. Death becomes the center of thought of necessity, as it is likely enough to do in any system. God is rich without man. What a contrast between this and the idea that whatever man may accomplish in accordance with God's will and purpose enters with him into the blessedness and the infinite work of God Himself!

Islam appears well when viewed in the light of its time, but if Mahomet was the last prophet and Islam the final religion, as it is claimed to be, then let the present condition of Mahometans be its defense.